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SECTION VII

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION

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Chapter XI

THE REVIVED ROMAN EMPIRE AND THE LAST CAESAR

Rev. 13:1-18

"THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES"

It is impossible for us to grasp fully the meaning of the thirteenth chapter of Revelation without reference to the book of Daniel. These two books dovetail, having the same theme—the character, course, and consummation of "the times of the Gentiles." By this expression we mean that period during which Gentile nations exercise lordship over the earth. But that is not an interminable period. Jesus said, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). In other words, "the times of the Gentiles," which began with Nebuchadnezzar, the first monarch of the kingdom of Babylon, will come to a close with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth, when the Lord Himself shall rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The period prior to "the times of the Gentiles" might properly be called "the times of the Jews." Then the children of Israel were in the land of Palestine; they had a temple; and Jehovah communed with them there as God of heaven and earth. It has ever been God's plan that through this nation the whole earth should share in divine blessing. This will be gloriously consummated when the Jews are legally constituted as a nation, obedient to their King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us consider for a moment God's wonderful dealing with his people. In the days of Judah's apostasy under Jehoiakim, God, in mercy and faithfulness, raised up prophets to tell the Israelites that, if they continued in their evil way, they would be taken captive by a great Gentile king. But they stubbornly refused to accept the warning. Therefore, Neb-

uchadnezzar was allowed to enter Palestine, to destroy Jerusalem, with its magnificent temple, and to set up his own dominion there. From that day until now, Palestine has been crushed under the heel of the Gentile nations, and—just as God had said—this oppression will continue until “the times of the Gentiles” are fulfilled.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S VISION

From the very first, God's plan has not been obscured. The Lord was pleased to give to Nebuchadnezzar a dream, the record of which we find in the second chapter of Daniel. He showed him an image with head of fine gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet part of iron and part of clay. In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a stone cut out of a mountain without hands; it fell upon the feet of the image, breaking them in pieces. When he looked again, the whole image had become like chaff of the summer threshingfloors, while the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that the image represented Gentile domination, from its beginning to its close. The first four metals in the vision represented four empires: Babylon, the head of gold; Medo-Persia, the breast and arms of silver; Greece, the belly and thighs of brass; and Rome, the legs of iron. Of the admixture in the feet and toes, more will be said later.

When the Son of God was born into the world, Rome was in power, and the prophecy represented by Nebuchadnezzar's image had been fulfilled up to that point. Then, about four hundred years after the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Roman Empire was divided into the eastern and western kingdoms, represented by the two legs of iron. In the eighth century these were broken up; and, from the human point of view, the empire of the Cæsars was forever done away. But God's decrees never fail; and faithful students of prophecy declared, in the face of ridicule, that in a yet future time, ten kingdoms would be formed on the territory of the old Roman Empire, ruled by ten kings. These ten kings will render allegiance to the beast, until “in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom” (Dan. 2:44). That will

mean the personal, bodily, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven; for He is the smiting Stone of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

DANIEL'S VISION

In the seventh chapter of Daniel, we have the same events foretold, with this difference: In the second chapter, God gave Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen, a picture of Gentile times as a heathen king would naturally see them—in the form of a man; in the seventh chapter, He gave to the man of God a picture of the same period as God sees it—as ravening beasts, warring monsters, indescribable creatures.

In Daniel's vision, he saw four great beasts come out of the sea. The Mediterranean Sea is in mind, with the kingdoms represented by the beasts surrounding it. There are four winds that strive on the sea—mystical symbols of the chaotic state of nations. Jeremiah says the nations are like the troubled sea.

First, out of the sea came a lion, having eagle's wings, and a man's heart was given to it. This living creature corresponds with the head of gold, or Babylon, in Nebuchadnezzar's image. Next, a bear appeared, with three ribs in its mouth, corresponding with the breast and arms of silver, or Medo-Persia. The third beast was like a leopard, corresponding with the belly and thighs of brass, or Greece. The fourth beast corresponds with the legs of iron, or the Roman Empire. Significant indeed are the words: “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns” (Dan. 7:7).

Like Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel sees in vision the coming of the Lord of glory, but not as a falling stone. Daniel sees Him coming as King of kings and Lord of lords. To him the Gentile nations were portrayed as ravenous beasts, as indeed they are; for what Gentile nation is there that would welcome a full disclosure of its history? Each of them has taken advantage of weaker nations. And is it not strange also that each of them is represented by a ravenous beast—England, a roar-

ing lion; Russia, a bear; China, a serpent; the United States, an eagle, with talons to devour and destroy? When we view the world situation we cry, "Come, Lord Jesus," for we shall never have peace on earth until the governments of earth have run their course, and the Son of God returns to reign.

The world does not seem to realize that the Roman Empire has not yet become extinct. Before the first World War, when Bible teachers declared that there would be in the future a confederacy, they were looked upon as fanatical or mentally incompetent. But then, almost overnight, there was a foreshadowing of just such a confederation. Since then many believed that the only way by which Europe could ever have peace would be for the nations of Europe to form a great league, and settle matters of dispute by arbitration, through a great league and a group of leaders with one at the head of them all. This is what many said when the first World War closed. Now they do not know *what* to say. But, although the League of Nations failed, and although Mussolini's attempts to revive the Roman Empire have failed, yet a league will be formed that will *seem* to avail. The only reason why the union of European states has not been realized is that there has not appeared, as yet, a man of sufficient political and military genius to bring about that federation of nations. But he will come! This is exactly what the Word of God declares. The world will believe that prosperity and peace can be effected apart from Christ; and the devil will use this false hope to accomplish his purpose. He himself will be the instigator of a great confederacy to solve the world's problems; but of this the Lord Himself declares: "I will overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him" (Ezek. 21:27).

JOHN'S VISION—THE BEAST

Rev. 13:1-10

Having considered Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's vision, we are better prepared for a study of the thirteenth chapter of Revelation, with which we are now occupied. Let us read verses 1 and 2:

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority."

Note that this is a composite beast: it has the combined characteristics of leopard, bear, and lion. You will remember that of the four beasts which Daniel saw coming up out of the sea, the first was a lion; the second, a bear; and the third, a leopard. A further correspondence between Daniel and Revelation is seen in the "little horn" of which Daniel writes—the little horn that came up out of the ten horns: "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things" (Dan. 7:8). The little horn, of course, is the "man of sin," the Antichrist.

Of him John writes: "And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:5-8).

Another passage of Scripture that gives further insight into the character of this beast is Rev. 17:8, where we read: "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is."

We shall not concern ourselves at this time with the context of these verses, since that will be considered in a later study, but shall confine our attention to the beast.

"And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast" (Rev. 17: 9-12).

From these verses we learn that the kings have received no kingdoms as yet, but they will get their kingdoms at the same time and in the same hour as the beast gets his. They represent seven forms of government. Five are past; one is; and one is yet to come.

This beast represents not only the Roman Empire, but also the head of it, the man who will epitomize in himself the Roman Empire. Each of the empires that is past has had a ruler who has gathered together in himself the whole of the empire which he represented; for example, in Babylon, it was Nebuchadnezzar; in Medo-Persia, it was Cyrus the Great; in Greece, it was Alexander the Great. From this it may be clearly seen that the descriptions of the beasts here mentioned may apply to empires, and to the heads of empires as well.

The leopard represents the Macedonian rapidity of conquering enemies. As it appeared in Daniel's vision, with four heads, it signifies this: Alexander the Great died childless, and each of his four leading generals took a division of the kingdom. The Roman Empire has not yet had such a head as Alexander, and that is what Europe is waiting for today. That is why the beast is described as, and associated with a man coming up and speaking great things. He has seven heads—seven forms of government—five past, one present, and one yet to come.

Looking at ancient history, we learn that the Roman Empire, up to John's time, had had five forms of government. The sixth, the imperial form, was in existence at that time; and John was informed that the seventh had not yet come. It has not come even yet; but it will come.

The Roman Empire is represented as being part bear, part lion, and part leopard, which means just this, to quote an-

other: "The Romans boasted that they never destroyed a civilization, but took the best of what they conquered and incorporated it into the Roman Empire." Consequently, the beast, to represent the Empire properly, must be a composite beast. What is true in regard to this method employed by the Roman Empire in the past will also be true of the program of the Antichrist as it relates to the present civilization. In other words, all the discoveries, sciences, and inventions, everything that has any value, the Antichrist will press into his regime.

The head that was wounded to death was the imperial form of government, which was in existence when John lived and for about four hundred years thereafter. Later the Huns and other barbarian tribes from the north and east swooped down and overwhelmed the Roman Empire. It was broken in pieces, and the head that was then in existence, the imperial government, was wounded unto death. But we read further ". . . and the wound was healed." While the Roman Empire has been non-existent since that time, it is a marvelous thing that all these nations have much in common; and from time to time the different groups have formed political alliances. The time will come when the beast will form the greatest alliance known to human history, and the world will see "the man of sin," for a time exercising great authority over the revived Roman Empire.

In Revelation 17:8 there is a reference to "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." "It was" in John's day. "It is not" at present. But it shall ascend out of the pit immediately after the translation of the church when the Antichrist, the last Cæsar, appears.

I am sure, from the statements of the late highly esteemed Woodrow Wilson and others in high authority, that it never entered their heads that the very thing they were trying to do will be accomplished by the devil himself. When the empire comes up, it will be the last counterfeit that the devil will produce—the supposition that there can be a millennium without the Son of God.

"And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition" (Rev. 17:11). The man that will come will be an imperialist. The ten horns are the ten kings that have received no kingdom as yet. Seven

heads represent seven forms of government. England was originally in the Roman Empire, together with Spain, Italy, Portugal, France, the Balkans, Asia Minor, Palestine, and northern Africa. When the church is raptured, a man will appear on the earth—a man who will epitomize in general all other world emperors. He will be the greatest scientist, the greatest leader, the most brilliant thinker the world has ever known. He will have a conference that will bring the ten kings into a great confederation; he will accomplish what Mussolini sought and failed to do; and he will appear the moment the church is taken away. He is the one John beheld on “a white horse,” going forth “conquering, and to conquer” (Rev. 6:2).

From generation to generation, the so-called Christian nations have had many devout men of God to lead in political, civic, and educational affairs. True it is that there have been many unscrupulous, ungodly, hard-hearted men in places of high authority. But the restraining influence of those men who have been led by the Spirit of God has given to our own generation the by-products of Christianity that we enjoy. We tremble to think what it will be like when every Christian statesman and educator and scientist is “caught up to meet the Lord in the air.” In that day the “man of sin” will have as his purpose what the Bolshevik Revolution sought to bring to pass—a godless, Christ-less civilization. Lenin, while he lived, had a great “five-year plan” to make Russia absolutely godless; and Stalin, his successor, continued to carry out that program. The coming man of sin will have a seven-year plan, and he will seek to sweep every vestige of Christianity from the face of the earth in that day. He will speak marvelous things against the God of heaven; and many will be deceived by what he says. They will give him the homage that only the Lord God has a right to receive. Then will come the revival of the Roman Empire and the imperial form of government that will cause all the world to “wonder after the beast.”

It is interesting to see how the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation agree perfectly in all these matters. The only difference is this: Daniel describes the head of the revived Roman Empire, “the little horn,” while John sees the Empire itself as such. We quote the following from Dr. A. C. Gaebelein’s work on the book of Daniel:

Daniel

1. Daniel saw the fourth beast, a great non-descript, with ten horns.
2. The little horn “had eyes and a mouth that spake very great things.”
3. The little horn: “He shall speak words against the Most High.”
4. The little horn: “He shall wear out the saints of the Most High.”
5. The little horn’s time of domineering power is “a time, and times, and dividing of times.”

Revelation

1. John beholds a beast out of the sea, with ten horns crowned (ten kings) and seven heads.
2. To the beast “was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies.”
3. The beast: “He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God.”
4. The beast: “And it was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them.”
5. The beast has power for 42 months (3½ years).

You see from this parallel that the same things are said of the beast in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation as are said of the “little horn” in the seventh chapter of Daniel. They must, therefore, be identical. In a word, after the church has been translated, there will arise in Europe a mighty dictator. He will be the dictator of dictators. He will weld the nations occupying the territory of the old Roman Empire into a ten-kingdom confederacy. Ten subordinate kings will be under his direction. These kings will not be of the type represented by King George of England, but rather like unto men such as Mussolini, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, and Hitler. The “man of sin” will have his throne in the city of Rome, and for seven years (the seventieth week of Daniel) he will continue as the last Cæsar. During the first three and a half years, he will make great promises. The last three and a half years will be the time of bitter persecution against all those who do not pay him divine honors and receive his mark.

One of these days, one must either bow the knee to God’s Christ or to the devil’s counterfeit. In the meantime, may God enable us, in this time of great temptation, to put forth every effort to make Christ known as the only One who can satisfy the needs of the human heart. We are on the threshold of the time when the church will be taken away, and the devil shall be in control, bringing out of the turbulent sea the re-

vived Roman Empire. As the world was in a similar state of unrest when Christ was born, so also when He comes the second time, He will find the world under the control of a man of whom Cæsar was only a shadow. My brother, my sister, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour? You will wish to know Him when that hour comes, and it draws on apace.

"THE FALSE PROPHET"

Rev. 13:11-18

What a graphic picture God has given us of "the beast . . . out of the sea," the "man of sin"! And now we come to the study of "the beast . . . out of the earth," "the false prophet," described in the latter half of the thirteenth chapter of Revelation. He will be the beast's representative in the land of Palestine. Let us read verse eleven for his portrait:

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon."

You will note that this beast does not come "out of the sea," which, according to Rev. 17:15, represents the chaotic state of Gentile nations; instead, he comes up "out of the earth," or, more correctly, "out of the land," referring to the land of Palestine.

He has two horns, representing civil and ecclesiastical power. In appearance he is like "a lamb," evidently imitating the Lamb of God, and pretending to be Israel's Messiah. But he speaks "as a dragon." And when he demands that the Jews worship the image of the beast, God's chosen people will know that he is a false prophet, an apostate. He will be "the echo" of the political ruler in the city of Rome.

"And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (verse 12).

This king in Palestine will be related to the last Cæsar in a way that Pontius Pilate was related to Cæsar nineteen hundred years ago. He will exercise all the power of the first beast before him in the sense that he will be backed by the "man of sin." He will be supported by all the power of the Roman Empire; and his main mission will be to cause all those who dwell in the land of Palestine (the Jewish nation) to worship the beast, the final head of political power. Doubtless it will be through this man that the "man of sin" will make the covenant with the Jew for seven years, described in the latter part of the seventh chapter of the book of Daniel. This covenant will give the Jew what he now desires above all other things—the land of Palestine as a national home—this in return for Jewish allegiance. No doubt this will be accomplished by the false prophet, a king who shall arise at Jerusalem. His ministry will be accompanied by the manifestation of superhuman powers: "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth (the land), that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (Rev. 13:13-15).

Paul speaks of this great blasphemy when he writes, in II Thess. 2:3-12:

"Let no man deceiveth you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God . . . even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might

be damned (or "judged," R.V.) who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

There are thousands of men today who do not believe any of the miracles recorded in the Word of God, who do not even believe the miracles attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ. The tragedy is that in many theological seminaries, the miracles of the Lord Jesus are explained on a natural basis. The day will come, however, when men will believe in miracles. They will see demonstrated before their eyes powers that are super-human, and all for the purpose of leading them to give heart and mind allegiance to the devil's man, which allegiance they have refused to give to Christ.

The setting up of the image of the beast is evidently what the Lord Jesus had in mind when He said in His Olivet discourse: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place . . . Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains . . . For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

The Apostle Paul evidently had the same in mind when he wrote in II Thess. 2:4: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."

Through the working of these miracles, the Roman world will acclaim the "man of sin" as a God-man, their eyes having been blinded to the fact that it is the "dragon" that has given to him his great power, his throne, and his authority.

"THE MARK OF THE BEAST"

Terrible will be the persecution in those days against all who refuse him allegiance. This persecution will be directed mainly against the godly remnant of Israel, who will then be in the land of Palestine, and who will repudiate the ungodly pretensions of this world-emperor.

"And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand,

or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. 13:16, 17).

From these verses we learn that in the reign of the "man of sin" there will be neither buying nor selling unless there is the wearing of some outward sign called the "mark of the beast," the sign which signifies that the would-be purchaser has given absolute allegiance of soul, body, and affections to the "man of sin."

During the first World War, we had a little suggestion of that state of affairs. I remember having gone into a shop one day to get some sugar. The man behind the counter said, as I put the money down, "You'll have to have something else besides money. Where's your card?" I did not have a card, for this regulation had just gone into effect; and though I had the money, I went without the sugar. Likewise, the second World War brought rationing of different commodities, which could not be purchased without ration cards.

So in the day of the Antichrist, when a man goes to buy or sell, the one with whom he wishes to deal will say, "Show your right hand," or "Show your forehead"; and those who do not wear "the mark of the beast" will go out empty-handed, without the necessities of life. Think what it will mean in that day for the man, with others dependent on him, yet who can not buy fuel to keep his little ones warm, or food to keep them from starving, without the "mark of the beast." It will be impossible for him to obtain bread and other things that keep body and soul together, unless he has some visible sign that the pretensions of the "man of sin" have been received by him. In other words, the law of this world-ruler prevailing everywhere will be, "Worship me, or starve."

THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST

"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred three score and six" (verse 18).

What is the meaning of this number—666? To state all the views that have been advanced, would fill a volume. There is, however, significance attached to numerals as found in the Word of God. Seven is the complete number. Six is incomplete, and is man's number. Man was created on the sixth day, and six is given in the Word of God as the number of man. Three is the number of manifestation. The coming man is given this number, 666, because he presents in his life and in his attitude toward God and His Christ, the fullest manifestation of what is in the heart of the natural man. What a terrible portrait this is! What an unfolding of the human heart is described in God's Word! What blasphemous things the human heart is capable of doing when all repressive influences have been removed! How necessary it is that a man should be "born again"! As we have an insight into the natural heart, as revealed by this man, we can understand the words of the Lord Jesus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN!"

Have you, my brother, ever been born again? Has there ever been a time in your life when you have believed on the Son of God who died for your sins and arose for your justification? In that day that is rapidly drawing nigh, when the church, which is His Body, is to be translated, membership with a mere church organization is not going to be of any value to you. Neither will attendance at the Lord's Table, or any other religious ceremony, no matter how earnest you may be. You must have a new life which comes from the heart of God, and that new life can be received only through the acceptance of Him who is the Life—Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Everything seems to indicate that the Church Age is rapidly coming to a close. The day of grace will soon be over, and the reason God bears with the world, as He is doing, is that He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." He is doing everything in His omnipotent power to bring you, my brother, to the end of yourself and to a realization of your need of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you go on, unsaved, your responsibility has in-

creased, because the gift of eternal life has been offered you once again. To your multitude of sins has been added the sin of the rejection of that offer; and each time you reject it, it becomes easier for you to do so. Every day you live, your character becomes more fixed. In His Word, God has shown us what is in store for those who love Him, and what their eternal destiny is to be. In the book of Revelation He gives us a little insight of what is to be the destiny of those who choose sin in preference to Christ.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Chapter XII

GOD'S PROTECTING CARE OF HIS OWN
AND
WARNING AGAINST THE WORSHIP OF THE
BEAST

(A PARENTHETICAL VISION)

Rev. 14:1-20

This thirteenth chapter of Revelation, which we studied in our last lesson, presents one of the darkest pictures that the Holy Spirit has caused to be penned in all the Word of God. Therein is set forth the consummation of sin in the coming "man of sin." All the rest of the Bible speaks of the sin of man; here is portrayed the "man of sin."

We have seen in previous studies that, after the translation of the church, this "man of sin" will arise in Europe; and the devil will give him his power, his seat, and his authority. He will be the head of the Roman Empire revived in its last form. Under him will be ten kings, ruling over the kingdoms of this last Gentile world-power. Each of these kings will be of the dictator type; and the "man of sin" will be the dictator of dictators, these ten subordinate kings giving him allegiance. Rome will be his capital city.

In Jerusalem he will have his representative, who will imitate the Lamb of God, yet will be "the false prophet," betraying his identity by what he says, when he speaks "as a dragon." Doubtless it will be through this man that the Jewish nation will make the covenant with the "man of sin," which will extend over a period of seven years. It will be through this man that the image of the beast will be set up in the temple. The Jews will refuse to worship the image; the Antichrist will, therefore, break his covenant with them; and this will be the signal for the great tribulation to begin. These things we studied in our last lesson.

With such a dark picture presented in the thirteenth chapter, it is not to be wondered at that, on turning to chapter fourteen, we find that the Spirit of God has given a series of blessed scenes to relieve the darkness. Yet even in promising these blessings, God has been faithful in warning of judgment to come. Accordingly, we see in chapter fourteen a number of divinely inspired pictures, showing the outcome of the great struggle that will take place in the coming day, between the forces of heaven and the forces of hell. And, as already intimated, some of these pictures tell of blessing to come; others warn men to flee from God's righteous judgment.

THE PRESERVATION OF THE 144,000 JEWS

A MILLENNIAL PICTURE

Rev. 14:1

"And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads" (verse 1).

Whenever you find reference in the Bible to Mount Zion, a certain mountain by that name, in the city of Jerusalem, is designated. No other earthly place is called by this name, although there is "the heavenly Jerusalem," sometimes called "Mount Sion" (Heb. 12:22). However, Rev. 14:1 presents a millennial scene. The "Lamb" standing on Mount Zion is a beautiful picture of the Son of God having returned to the earth to rule and to reign. In other words, we have here, in miniature, a view of the millennial rule of our Lord.

The 144,000, who are shown here with Christ, will, of course, be the same body of people as that mentioned in the seventh chapter of Revelation. You will remember that in connection with the opening of the seals, 144,000 Jews were sealed, 12,000 from each tribe. These are to be God's witnesses during the reign of the Antichrist. They are to preach the Gospel of the kingdom: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." They will herald the fact of a coming King, and will present His claims over against the claims of the Antichrist. Through their ministry, "a great multitude,

which no man could number" will come out of the great tribulation. (See chapter 7:8-17.) It is against this witnessing body, these Jews who are to be sealed after the translation of the church, that the "man of sin" will launch his fury. Every conceivable means of silencing their testimony and destroying them will be pressed into service. However, the Son of God will preserve them through those terrible days. Not one hair of their heads will be injured. In the verses before us, we find all marvelously preserved and safe in the millennial reign of our Lord. What a testimony this is to His protecting care!

My brother, if the Lord is able to preserve this witnessing body during that terrible period, we ought to be perfectly assured that those who put their trust in Him during this present age are absolutely secure. We are in the Father's hand, and none can pluck us out. (See John 10:27-29). It will ever be true, as it is now, that "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:38, 39).

"HARPERS HARPING WITH THEIR HARPS"

A HEAVENLY SCENE

Rev. 14:2-5

"And I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth" (Rev. 14:2, 3).

John sees a great multitude of harpers in heaven, and they sing a song in the gloryland, a song that only the 144,000 can sing. The question arises, who are the harpers? You will note that they are not "the living creatures"; nor are they the "elders"; for these harpers sing their song before the "living creatures" and before the "elders." We saw from chapter four that the twenty-four "elders" represent the Old Testa-

ment saints and the church of Jesus Christ. The harpers are a distinct body, seemingly a multitude that is in some way connected with the 144,000 down here upon the earth, for they sing a song that only the 144,000 can understand. This great multitude in heaven is evidently the body of people that will be saved during the tribulation period through the preaching of the 144,000. As a result of their turning to God, they will suffer martyrdom. But in the presence of the Lord, they will sing the song of redemption and of victory; and the 144,000 upon the earth will rejoice with them.

It is a wonderful thing, my friends, to have in heaven those who have been brought there as a result of your ministry. The song of some in heaven will mean more to you than the song of others. The great rejoicing of those whom you have brought to Christ will add to your own joy, just as the song of this great body of harpers filled the hearts of the 144,000 with singing. Will you have any in heaven whose presence and song will make you rejoice? Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, saying, "Ye are our glory and joy," our "crown of rejoicing" (I Thess. 2:19, 20). Can you say that to any you have led to Christ?

The song which this "great multitude" will sing in heaven, as already intimated, is the song of redemption. All music in heaven gathers around the theme of redemption, but men who have lived in different ages will have different notes in their songs. These singers, therefore, have a certain song that no other men can sing. The "elders" do not sing it. When you and I get to glory, with all the Old Testament saints and those saved in this day, we shall together praise God for redemption, and center all our worship upon the Lord Jesus Christ, but there will be a little difference in the way we shall worship God, because our experiences will have been different.

It is said of this great company that "these are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God" (verse 4, 5).

The reference to their being virgins does not mean that they are all women or that they are unmarried. Spiritual adul-

tery, in the Old Testament, is associated with the worship of idols; and in the New Testament, it results from friendship with the Christ-rejecting world. It is clear, then, that the members of this heavenly company have refused to worship the image of the beast, and have chosen the pathway of separation from the world; consequently, they are called virgins because "in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." A faultless person before God is one who has been washed in the blood of Christ, and who walks "in the light, as he is in the light."

"THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL"

Rev. 14:6, 7

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (*Rev. 14:6, 7*).

These verses take us back into the tribulation period. They portray the angel preaching the "everlasting gospel," warning men against the worship of the beast. Note that the angel's message is called the "everlasting gospel." That does not imply that there is more than one Gospel. Only one Gospel has been proclaimed through the ages, but it has various phases.

We have already seen, for example, that there is the Gospel of the kingdom, which heralds Christ as the coming King and the Heir to the Davidic throne. This Gospel will be preached by the 144,000, just as it was preached by John the Baptist and the Lord Himself prior to His rejection at Jerusalem and the postponement of the kingdom.

Again, there is the Gospel of the grace of God, which we preach during this age, through which the church is being called out.

There is one aspect of the Gospel, however, that has characterized it in all the ages past and will be found also in all

those that are to come; namely, that there is one God, and that He alone shall be worshipped. That is called the "everlasting gospel." In other words, this is an aspect of the Gospel that existed before the world came into existence. Lucifer rejected it when he lifted his hand against the throne of God. During the tribulation period, there will arise one like him who will set himself up as God, and who will endeavor to have divine honors paid him. Consequently, this angel is sent from the presence of God to present to the world the "everlasting gospel"—that there is one God, the God who made heaven and earth and all that therein is, and that none but He shall be worshipped.

The amazing thing is that though that Gospel is to be preached by an angel, we do not have any intimation in this chapter, or in any of the other chapters that follow, that the nations will turn from this, the most terrible form of idolatry that the world has ever known, and will prostrate themselves before the great God who created all things.

Every man has a god of some sort that he worships; if not the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," that man is bowing down to some other god, and has yielded allegiance elsewhere. That is true of this age as well as of the future period about which we are studying. My friend, what is your god? Is it money, stocks, bonds, pleasure, or what? A certain and sudden judgment will one day fall upon all those who are idolaters and who follow after strange gods.

THE FALL OF BABYLON

Rev. 14:8

The fourth picture is that of the fall of Babylon:

"And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (*Rev. 14:8*).

That is a general statement, and it is all that is said just here about the fall of Babylon. The reason for this brevity is that, in chapters seventeen and eighteen the Spirit of God

gives to us the details of the fall of that system represented by the woman who has over her head the name written, "MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH" (17:5).

That Babylon, as we shall see, represents all the false and corrupt forms of so-called Christianity that are to be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord when the true church has been caught away. We shall see, when we come to the study of chapters seventeen and eighteen, why that false system of Christianity is named as it is. God is here announcing its certain doom. When the true church is caught up to meet the Lord in glory (Rev. 4:1, 2), the false church will sink into darkness and be overwhelmed with a terrible judgment.

WARNING AGAINST WORSHIP OF THE BEAST

Rev. 14:9-11

The fifth picture is one of certain judgment that will come upon the worshippers of the beast:

"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name" (verses 9-11).

These are fearful words, but it is God who speaks them. I read that verse to my congregation in Minneapolis some years ago. At the close of the sermon a man came to me and said, "Is that the kind of God you worship—a God who says He is going to do this to those who recognize the claims of the coming 'man of sin'? How do you reconcile that with the God of love?"

I said to him what I say to you now: The only way I have of knowing what Almighty God is going to do is by turning to His Word and allowing Him to speak for Himself. This old earth is covered with the ashes of nations that have forgotten God, and in the days gone by He has wiped out more than one city because of its sin. Sin is one thing that He must judge, and that terrible judgment is portrayed in the solemn words that are here recorded.

THE NEED OF PATIENCE—THE BLESSED DEAD OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

Rev. 14:12, 13

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12).

It will take a great deal of patience and steadfastness for a man to be true to God in those days when the Antichrist is reigning. It takes a great deal of patience today, but the trials that we go through now are only child's play, when compared with what will confront the godly in that time of trouble. We talk today of persecution. We should be ashamed to use the word. How little of persecution we know! Yet it is true that those who live godly lives shall suffer persecution in this world. But the verse just quoted refers to the great patience that will be required to live for God in that coming day.

It is only in connection with the terrible description of the tribulation period that we can understand the following words:

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13).

While it is true that these words describe the state of bliss of those of all ages who die "in the Lord," yet the martyred saints of the tribulation period will be particularly "blessed." Those who escape alive out of the hands of the Antichrist will enter into the millennial kingdom, and share the earthly blessings. But those who die during the tribulation period will have an added blessing, in that they will depart to be in the

heavenly kingdom. Therefore, in that day, as in no other, it will be a blessing for the one who is true to God to die.

Of course, we know that Paul wrote to the Philippian Christians, saying that "to depart, and to be with Christ . . . is far better" than to live on earth (Phil. 1:23). This is ever true of the born-again soul. But in a special sense the saints of the tribulation period will rejoice to "die in the Lord." Not only will they be with Him, but they will also escape the fury of the Antichrist that will descend upon believers as the seventieth week of Daniel draws to a close.

THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

Rev. 14:14-20

The last portion of this chapter has to do with the closing event of the tribulation period:

"And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs" (Rev. 14:14-20).

These verses describe what will take place at the Battle of Armageddon, the last great war on earth. Just as Satan, through the Antichrist and the God-defying armies of the

world, is persecuting the Jews; just as each nation is seeking to destroy the others, the Lord Himself will return in glory to put an end to these wicked devices. The picture is graphically told in Rev. 19:11-16, and this we shall study in a later lesson. In the verses before us, however, the emphasis is placed upon the terrible harvest of that day.

The Lord Himself described the scene when, in Matt. 13:30, He said of the wheat and the tares: "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn."

The saved, represented by the "wheat," will enter into His earthly kingdom; but the wicked, the "tares," will be burned with fire. Terrible judgment in that day will fall upon all the ungodly in the land of Palestine, both Jew and Gentile. The entire land, one thousand six hundred furlongs in length, is seen drenched in blood. What a terrible picture!

"NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION"

How we ought to praise God that in infinite grace He has saved us from this awful consequence of sin, and that the church will be above the clouds when the storm breaks! Again I urge every man and woman who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ to find a refuge in Him now while there is opportunity. "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." This "day of salvation" is rapidly drawing to a close. Very soon the last member will be added to the body of Christ, and the translation of the church will immediately follow. Then the dark days of judgment will begin on earth. Accept Christ now, my friend, while you may!

Chapter XIII

THE SEVEN VIALS OF GOD'S WRATH

Rev. 15:1-16:21

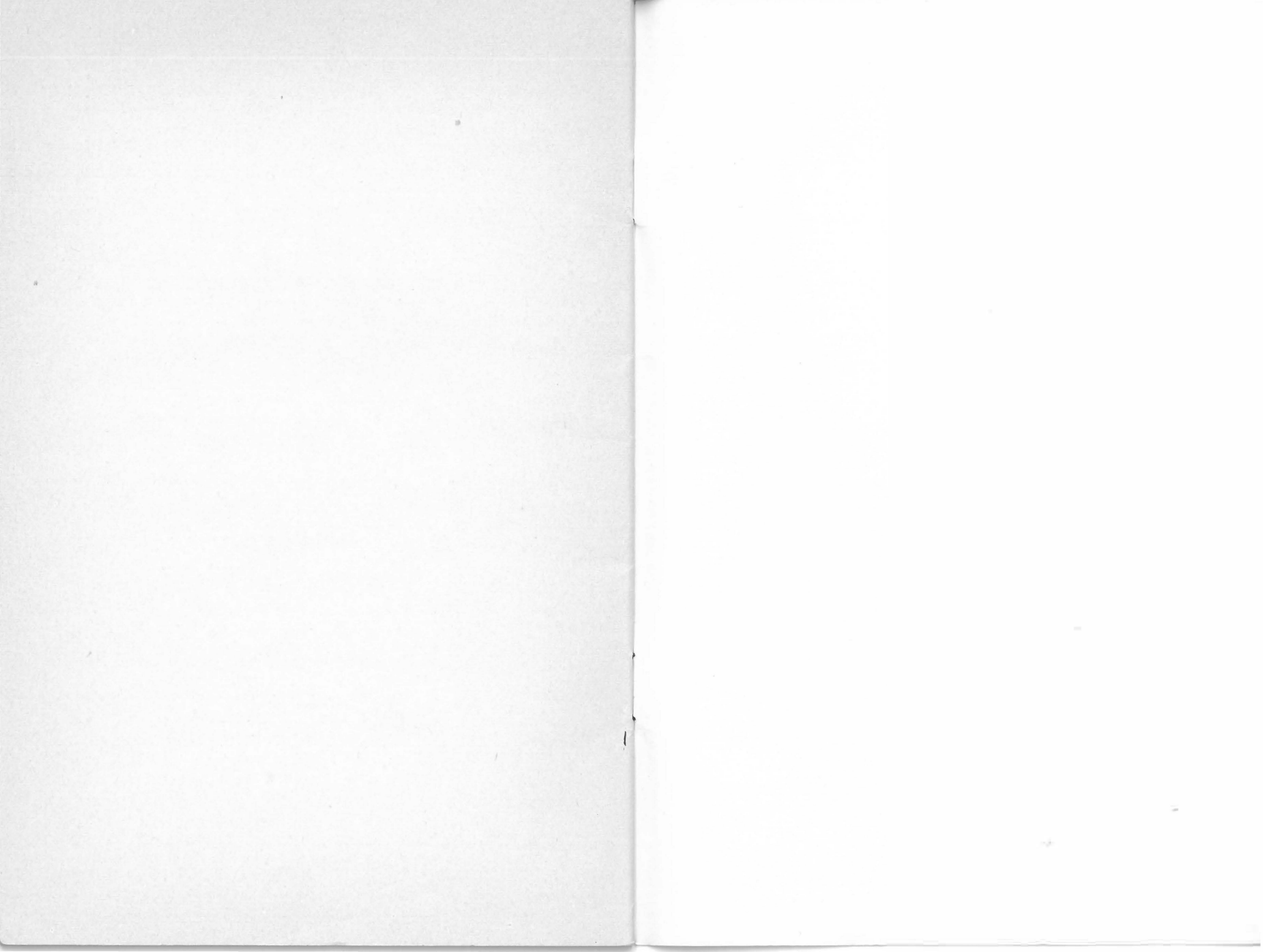
In chapters fifteen and sixteen the Spirit of God takes us back to the events of chapter thirteen, and gives additional, detailed information concerning the judgments that will come upon the earth as a result of the worship that the nations will give to the "man of sin."

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" (15:1).

The seven last plagues will be meted out upon this earth just prior to the visible, bodily return of the Lord Jesus Christ. God will thus judge the earth. It has proved itself impenitent and has closed its heart to all His appeals to forsake sin and turn to Him.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN WARNING MEN OF JUDGMENT TO COME

We have seen in our former studies that, after the church is caught away, the hatred of God against sin will be expressed in three series of judgments: in connection with the opening of the seven seals, the blowing of the seven trumpets, and the pouring forth of the seven vials of the wrath of God. The judgments connected with the seven seals are called "the wrath of the Lamb" (6:16), whereas the last seven plagues are called "the wrath of God" (15:1). These last shall constitute the fiercest, the most intense expression that God has given of His eternal hatred of sin, and that expression shall be given just prior to the time when the Son of God returns to this earth in glory.



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